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**Question answered:** In the Foreword of “The Bluest Eye,” when Morrison mentions self-loathing (self-hatred), according to her, which is more important, accepting rejection as legitimate, or being hated for thing you have no control over?

It seems like Morrison, in the foreword of "The Bluest Eye" alone, does not provide a direct answer to the question mentioned above because neither she views accepting rejection as legitimate to be beneficial for individuals and society nor does she promote the idea that it is unavoidable to remain silent and be hated for the thing over which one does not have control. However, Morrison entails that the book “The Bluest Eye” puts greater emphasis on discussing the tragic result of accepting rejection as legitimate. Furthermore, Morrison’s depiction of different groups of victims of racism covertly suggests that accepting rejection is more important than being hated for things that one has no control over.

Evidence suggests that Morrison indeed does think that accepting rejection as legitimate is more important than being hated for something that one has no control over. “When I began writing The Bluest Eye, I was interested in something else. Not resistance to the contempt of others, ways to deflect it, but the far more tragic and disabling consequences of accepting rejection as legitimate, as self-evident. (Morrison, 9)” This is the direct evidence that Morrison views accepting rejection as legitimate is more important than fighting it or being hated for

things that one has no control over, because Morrison states that the book is focused more on legitimate rejection as opposed to the theme of being hated for things that one does not have control over. Actually, both facets are included in the book, to which different people have different responses. Being hated for the thing that a person has no control over resonates with the lives of many individuals. Accepting the rejection as legitimate, on the other hand, can leave certain individuals more helpless and discouraged.

Morrison divides people into four groups, in which age, parenting style, lifestyle in adulthood, and society can play a role in shaping different life trajectories under the influence of racism. The four divided groups have their own unique responses to racism. Specifically, different groups can either accept rejection as legitimate, fight against the unjustified rejection, or silently endure the hatred for the thing that they have no control over. As the reader flips through the pages of "The Bluest Eye", it becomes clear that we all should accept rejection as legitimate or normal, but it is up to us to fight against such rejection under racism.

Like Morrison says, people who accept rejection as legitimate can develop anti-social traits or commit violence towards people or society at large, thus reproducing the same harm again and again. "I knew that some victims of powerful self-loathing turn out to be dangerous, violent, reproducing the enemy who has humiliated them over and over. (Morrison, 9)" This is the first group, which represents people who suffer from the established self-loathing or self-hatred that casts them in a worse situation resembling a recurrent cycle from generation to generation. These are the extremists who prefer to use violent means to fight racism and discrimination. In addition, self-loathing, according to Morrison, can propel some other people (the second group) to surrender their identity and follow the institutionalized and hierarchically created sets of rules or even prejudices entrenched in the social structure as Morrison describes

them: “Others surrender their identity; melt into a structure that delivers the strong persona they lack.” (Morrison, 10). The second group internalizes and justifies the discrimination by assimilating themselves with mainstream society, as Morrison describes them in the foreword: “Most others, however, grow beyond it. (Morrison, 10)” The third group, according to Morrison, grows beyond the mindset of self-hatred, and they are the ones that are most likely to change the status quo, which brings them towards self-hatred because their incentive to fight racism is so strong, and they realize that self-hatred is nothing but a way to self-destruction. Finally, there are the invisible individuals that collapse silently as a result of self-hatred. Morrison made a comment on the invisible group as follows: “But there are some who collapse, silently anonymously, with no voice to express or acknowledge it. They are invisible. (Morrison, 10)” The invisible group (the fourth group) simply ignores the conflict between identity and the way they are treated by racists, thus never being able to establish a sense of identity and develop confidence or even awareness of the conflict. Hence, different groups having different responses to racism demonstrate that accepting rejection as legitimate can leave individuals helpless, but in other cases, some individuals can develop strong incentives to change their state of self-hatred, which is often the result of accepting rejection as legitimate.

Interestingly, Morrison, throughout the book, does not express her opinions on which group is good and which group is bad. Rather, Morrison simply narrates the internal state of the main character and events happening around her, in which readers are able to form a continuum and categorize the relationship between hatred and the self-growth of the victim of prejudice. Hence, the readers of the book, through the close examinations of the characters who either suffer from self-loathing or internalizing rejection, are able to see what we can and should do

about racism. Variables such as race, gender, and youth greatly influence the life trajectory of any individual, so they are being carefully narrated and examined in the book.

Wordy as it may seem, the response continuum accompanies Morrison's categorization of four groups in all aspects because the victims of racism all have to choose to either ignore or respond to the rejection. Again, in the context of Morrison's categorization of four groups, the readers are able to see different response being taken by different people, including using violence to solve the issue or ignoring and blindly internalizing the issue. The continuum is hence formed in that an individual can choose to ignore or blindly follow racism; the individual can also choose to advocate for his own or his people's interests in a legal and reasonable way, and the individual can eventually choose to use violence against it, which can often leave him persecuted by the justice system. One of the important aspects of racism is racial beauty, which Morrison discusses in the foreword: "The assertion of racial beauty was not a reaction to the self-mocking, humorous critique of cultural/racial foibles common in all groups, but against the damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze. (Morrison, 11)" As Morrison views it, the acceptance of racism is essentially the internalization of the idea that one race is inherently inferior to other races, and the internalization is what destroys individuals. The congruence between the plot and foreword serves as a way to raise awareness of the internalization of racism, which we can consider accepting rejection as legitimate.

The first group includes people who hold the most extreme hostility against racism. They would do anything to support their self-esteem and race, from protesting to the shooting of law enforcement agencies. In one of the scenes in "The Bluest Eye", the main character Claudia and her sister Frieda are denied access to the car of Rosemary Villanucci. When this happens,

Claudia instantly feels anger and starts to hold hostility against Villanucci. As Claudia narrates, “When she comes out of the car we will beat her up, make red marks on her white skin, and she will cry and ask us do we want her to pull her pants down” (Morrison, 9). The anger is so intense that Claudia wants to assault her. Furthermore, Claudia firmly believes that she should not accept any offer from Villanucci when she does so because of the importance of preserving their pride. The tendency to use violence against racism is manifested through the narrative of Claudia. Coupled with being a child, Morrison demonstrates how self-loathing can be instilled in children and how easy it is for children to develop a violent tendency or deep hostility against social norms that are based on racism as a result of being the victims of racism for generations. However, not all people have this intense response to racism. Some people tend to have a less intense response to racism, and they do accept race-based rejection.

The second group, categorized by Morrison as the invisible group, has no intent to exert their right to influence the status quo whatsoever, and they are the ones that are exploited by racism but say nothing about it. Morrison describes the second group as: “Others surrender their identity; melt into a structure that delivers the strong persona they lack.” In other words, the invisible group internalizes any form of racism, and their cognition and mind tell them that it is the right thing to do, even if it is done at the cost of their pride, freedom, and the rights of their own racial group. Even more so, they will try to sacrifice their identity to assimilate with the dominant group or population to gain self-fulfillment. Pecola is a quintessential example of the second group, but it is not all her fault. Pecola wants blue eyes because it has been instilled in her mind that blue eyes are beautiful eyes. “It had begun with Christmas and the gift of dolls . The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll. (Morrison, 19)” Receiving a blue-eyed doll was the norm even among African American children, as Claudia

says. Not only does the marketing strategy of the toy send the message to her, but the people who are supposed to love her further also solidify Pecola's belief that she is ugly and that it is reasonable for her to suffer and endure injustice committed by her father. So here, parental support and parenting style are again emphasized by Morrison to exhibit the view that a person's demographic background can drastically change them. Another noteworthy message by Morrison is that it may be fine for anyone to avoid racism and suffer from the consequences of racism, but someday somehow, the avoidance and numbness may cost one's fortune, be it virginity, money, youth, freedom, or life.

The third group consists of people growing beyond racism and the social structures that are obviously unfair and evil. Such people are the ones that lead the group because they are competent in managing their anger, and they know how to strategically work their way up in society and fight for the rights of their people on a large scale. Such people deeply realize the need to reverse racial discrimination, but they calculate every step in order to achieve the best result in their limited lifetime, where every little detail can facilitate or ruin a continuous process of gaining success. The Bluest Eye does not include any characters who are in the third group. The closest ones might be Claudia herself and Pauline, who tries to make everything perfect for both her white employers and family. In the context of the behavior continuum, if both of these individuals could have better control over their emotions and a cleverer way to fight racism, they could have made more significant influences on the issue. Pauline has the necessary traits to be a leader, but very little does she make herself aware of racism and put effort into resolving the issue.

The fourth group is made up of people who are invisible. Like Morrison addressed in the foreword, people in this category collapse due to the discrimination they experience. They have

little to no incentive to fight for their rights, and oftentimes they impose similar suffering on their family and surroundings. Cholly Breedlove is a representative example of the fourth group.

Despite being abused by white people and suffering as a child, he does not choose to change his fate. He goes on and fights with his wife, Pauline, and rapes his daughter, Pecola. Although he is not portrayed as a monster who suffered from racism and cruelty when he was a child, he has no incentive of any kind to change the situation.

A question arises as to how we should help different groups and to what extent society should render its resources to help people make their ends meet and rise up to be successful individuals in society, but it perhaps does not pertain to the question of this essay. Outside of this essay's question, both accepting rejection as legitimate and being hated for the thing that one has no control over are important. This is not to say that we should accept rejection as it is, or that it is reasonable to be hated for the thing over which the person has no control over. On the contrary, it is important to be able to endure the suffering, see through it, and eventually conquer it.

Perhaps the different groups will always utilize their own defense mechanisms or blindness when facing racism, but it should be made clear to everyone that racism is fundamentally wrong and evil. It allows the dominant racial group to exploit, manipulate, and harm the minority.

Establishing self-confidence and self-efficacy is crucial for anyone to succeed and achieve self-fulfillment. When people live in a world of rejection and hatred, peace, justice, equality, liberty, and freedom will never be achieved. To answer the question more directly, we are confident to say that it is normal to encounter unfair rejection and hatred, but when it comes, we have to fight against them in a righteous way through establishing our self-confidence, social responsibility, self-efficacy, and the right sense of justice.

In conclusion, Morrison puts a greater focus on the issue of accepting rejection as legitimate because it means destruction and destitution for any person. Not only does she say herself in the foreword, but the storyline and the fate of each character also assert this fact.



## Reference

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Plume Book, 1994. Print.